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Sen. Hardiman hails passage of Wheels to Work bills

LANSING – The Senate today unanimously approved a bill sponsored by Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, that would eliminate the sales tax for people who receive donated vehicles from charitable organizations. The goal of the legislation is to help remove lack of transportation as an obstacle to getting a good-paying job.

"Without personal transportation, many job opportunities simply are inaccessible," Hardiman said. "We should be encouraging organizations to donate cars to low-income people in Michigan, not hindering them with taxes on the vehicle. My legislation corrects this."

Goodwill Association of Michigan is developing a statewide transportation initiative to provide vehicles for families and individuals working toward independence and self-sufficiency. Under Michigan law, people have to pay sales tax on the value of the vehicle they receive.

Goodwill works with other Michigan organizations to help remove obstacles to employment for people with disabilities or other disadvantages. Hardiman once worked for Goodwill in the Grand Rapids area.

The "Wheels to Work" program takes qualified donated vehicles and repairs them. The vehicles then are sold to qualified buyers at below market prices based upon the buyers' financial status and lack of transportation to work.

Hardiman's bill would require recipients to be employed at least 20 hours a week and keep their jobs after receiving the vehicle. It also would require that if a person doesn't have a job or is employed fewer than 20 hours a week, the person also could receive a vehicle if the recipient can show a position can't be accepted without having transportation first.

Editor's note: An audio comment from the senator discussing the legislation is available online at senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire.